


**Unconditional Indefinable:
A Creative Exploration of the Concept of Love**

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

Love is an idea that many say guides the actions they take in life. It is a simple four-letter word that is used to describe a myriad of emotional outcomes. Often, human beings simplify the idea of love into a romantic ideal, but it is instead a constantly changing notion of how we should live our lives. There is no one connotation for love; it is a yearning for affection that causes feelings ranging from extreme anger to complete bliss. Before one can try to understand other's lives, she must explore the emotion within her own life. In order to gain a better understanding of love within my life and the lives of those close to me, I have analyzed the many emotional outcomes that occur from having or wanting different types of affection in one's life.

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Author's Statement
Unconditional Indefinable by Laura Mathews

I started this project as a fanciful exploration of the world around me through the lens of love. I knew there were infinite aspects of the thing we call love that could be explored, but the ones I first focused on were of a more positive nature. I wanted to focus on the unconditional nature of love and how it uncontrollably creates goodness in people's lives through connection, but I was ignoring a darker, more painful side of love that we all see in our lives. Love creates acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness, but it also causes longing and heartache. I couldn't write about love without looking at both sides, or I would be telling a lie about reality.

So, I started writing about the hurt that can be caused when people open themselves up to one another, the confusion that comes with not knowing how others feel about you, the fear of loneliness, and the notion of lust. During the last six months I have questioned my life on many levels as well as the people within it, and I have brought much of the emotion that came from my life straight to these pages. Sometimes I was angry, or resentful, or hopeless, or lonely, or confused. I didn't hold back; I wanted my expressions to be real. For this reason, there are some poems that could be offensive to readers, but I didn't think my work would be a realistic portrayal of what love can do to a person without these pieces. Love is intense, and it causes other intense feelings to rise to the forefront.

Love is chameleon-like in the way it adapts to people in different situations and the emotional context it creates. For this reason, each poem title starts with the simple phrase "Love is." The concept can be so many things and for this reason, it was simple to

title each poem in this way. The titles run the gamut from “Love is anger” to “Love is not what you expect” and display a wide array of emotions that are caused by the human need for affection.

Besides the obvious use of words to display emotions, I also used the physical design of the book to reflect my views on love. The color used from page to page reflects emotional change over time, and although the book is small in size, physically, it has a large emotional impact for the reader, just as our actions towards others may seem small but can in turn have big effects on those around us.

The first half of my book examines the darker effects of feeling something for another person. Most of these pieces were written during a time where I wasn’t at peace with myself or my emotions, and this is openly expressed. To follow the slow descent into darker, more painful parts of emotion, the pages increasingly deepen in color, until the pages are almost black. These poems in the center mark the most desperate and hopeless of times.

Fortunately, life is cyclical, and out of darkness eventually comes light. The piece “Love is Forgiveness”, an essay about my relationship with my brother, can be seen as the sunrise into a happier day. Starting with this essay, the themes become more positive, as I look at completion and contentment with another person, the excitement of crushes, and the inescapable power of unconditional love. The pages also change to a dull yellow at the start of the section and then get increasingly bright. The last page is an almost blinding yellow color, signifying light and positive energy returning to my life.

Although the original context of my thesis was this light side of love and I had planned on titling the overall piece “Unconditional,” I realized that the concept of love is

and always will be indefinable because no one person has the same definition for love as the next; even the bible uses three separate words for love: eros, philos, and agape. My first piece in the book, "Love is," highlights my struggle to define love through the eyes of others and my realization that love is far too complex an idea to be tied down to a few-word definition. Thus, the title for my overall work was eventually re-titled "Unconditional Indefinable" to reflect the incredibly vast number of connotations for that one four-letter word that influences us all from day to day.